# Life After Death—Part 4

by Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

**Can Near-Death Experiences precipitate the onset of psychic powers and contact with spirit guides?**

In examining the correlation between the near-death experience [NDE] and development of psychic abilities, we are establishing another connection to spiritistic influence, for psychic abilities are integrally connected with spiritism.[1]

Many researchers have noted that the NDE frequently leads to the development of psychic powers.[2] The research of Kenneth Ring, who includes an entire chapter on "NDEs and Psychic Development," leads one to conclude that the NDE can precipitate psychic powers and experiences as if the event itself had somehow opened the door to the psychic world—reminiscent of what occurs in occult initiations of all types. He observes,

> I could not help noticing the frequency with which psychic events were spontaneously reported by NDErs and how often these experiences were said to have occurred following the NDE.... Many NDErs simply claimed that their psychic sensitivities have developed strikingly since their NDE.[3]

In fact, Ring views psychic development as a natural outgrowth of the NDE, as a part of the blossoming "fruit" from the implanted psychic seed: "Finally, as a byproduct of this spiritual development, NDErs tend to manifest a variety of psychic abilities afterward that are an inherent part of their transformation."[4] Ring also cites the research of psychiatrist Bruce Greyson, who "discovered that there was an increased incidence for virtually all of the psychic and psi-related phenomena he assessed,…"[5]

Richard Kohr is an educational researcher with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and a member of the research committee for the 40,000-member Association for Research and Enlightenment (founded by the famous medium Edgar Cayce), a group specializing in psychic practice and dissemination of occult material. Dr. Kohr also concludes that the NDE incident per se tends to lead to accelerated psychic development.[6] He remarks, "It is interesting to note that a variety of studies have revealed linkages among psi [psychic abilities], transcendent states, psi-related experiences, and NDEs."[7]

The all-loving, all-encompassing "Light" is the characteristic feature of the NDE.[8] As Dr. Morse says, "There are several ways to tap this spiritual energy. My guess is that the psychic powers to do so exist in all of us and that given the time and desire we could, see the Light without having to die for it."[9] Indeed, through psychic development this happens all the time in the world of the occult.

With the onset of psychic abilities following the NDE, perhaps it is also not surprising that many people encounter personal spirit guides. For example, "Barbara stated that she has had

more clairvoyant and telepathic experiences since her NDE.... She says that she is much more intuitive [i.e., psychic] than she was before and more in touch with an inner source of wisdom and has increased contact with spiritual guides."[10]

All in all, spiritistic encounters during and/or after the NDE appear to occur in a significant number of cases—in at least 20 percent and possibly up to 40 percent.[11]

But as we will see, the NDE can precipitate more than psychic experiences and encounters with spirits. It can also induce dramatic personality and worldview changes that undergird a permanent conversion to the occult.

**Do NDEs frequently represent an initiation into the world of the occult?**

Dr. Raymond Moody is the author of the smash best-seller *Life After Life.* For over 20 years, he has worked on the cutting edge of NDE research, talking with almost every NDE researcher in the world.[12] He is amazed at the tremendous power of the NDE: "The most impressive thing about NDEs to me is the enormous changes in personality that they bring about in people. That NDEs totally transform the people to whom they happen shows their reality and power."[13]

Unfortunately, for many people this NDE transformation is really part of a powerful initiation into the world of the occult. The presence of the "being of light" and the alleged dead, the development of psychic powers, the insulation against Christian belief, and the promotion of an occult philosophy and a liberal religious worldview prove this. While the NDE, in particular the deep NDE, tends to make people religious, even deeply religious, it does not make them Christian. In fact, it makes many people deeply religious in a way that is often anti-Christian. As we saw, it is true that distinct and usually positive personality changes may result. These changes, however, are often reminiscent of, though not always equivalent to, "higher self" transformations found in cultic, metaphysical, occult and New Age literature.[14]

For example, the NDErs' concept of God is more liberal, Eastern or occult. From their initiation they *know* God loves and accepts them (and everyone else) apart from personal faith in Christ, and their basic, positive personality alteration tends to reinforce this conviction.[15] Thus, according to Ring, "The NDE not only changes an individual's life, but often completely and radically transforms it.... It would appear justified—again in some, surely not all, instances—to claim that NDEs tend to confer a new personal identity upon the NDEr as well as bring about major changes in behavior."[16]

Thus, the essence of the deep NDE is that it is a profoundly religious-occult experience that incorporates an often dramatic transformation of the individual. In the words of leading scientist and New Age proponent, Stanislav Grof, M.D.,

> The core NDE is a powerful catalyst of spiritual awakening and consciousness evolution. Its long term aftereffects include... [a] more open attitude toward reincarnation, and [the] development of [a] universal spirituality that transcends divisive interests of religious sectarianism and resembles the best of the mystical traditions or great Oriental philosophies.[17]

Ring himself observes, "The NDE is essentially a spiritual experience that serves as a catalyst for spiritual [i.e., occult] awakening and development."[18]

Consider again what the NDE frequently accomplishes. As a result of a brief encounter with "death," the participant experiences a dramatic religious "conversion type" personality change, an accompanying shift in worldview in harmony with the occult dynamics of the experience, a concern with alleged higher consciousness, the development of psychic powers, and the felt need to share the profound glories of the experience with others. Furthermore, the experience

and its aftereffects appear to "grow" on the person, as if following the plan of some intelligent purpose.[19]

We cannot possibly list and evaluate all the published material relevant to categorizing the NDE as a potentially powerful occult initiation and transformation. Nevertheless, we may in very brief fashion note the following five points:

(a) *The NDE can be a consuming mystical experience:* Some researchers describe what NDErs encounter as "cosmic consciousness."[20] For example, psychologist Dr. John Pennachio, writing in "Near-Death Experience As Mystical Experience," observes the correlation of the NDE to Walter Pahnke's classic nine-point typology of mystical experience, noting that "such transformations are also characteristic of near-death experience.... A considerable number of near-death experiences move the subject toward attributes characteristic of mystical states. It is as if there is a brief, but intense program in mysticism.... Spiritual values, the higher self, and higher consciousness come to influence life."[21]

(b) *The NDE may resemble experiences induced by psychedelic drugs such as LSD and Hashish:* The extensive LSD research of psychiatrist Stanislav Grof reveals notable similarities between the NDE and experiences with LSD: "The experiences of patients under the influence of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) are remarkably similar to those described in the [Raymond] Moody model [of the composite NDE]...."[22]

In "Hashish Near-Death Experience" R.K. Siegel and A.E. Hirschman, of the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences School of Medicine at UCLA, note that

> …intoxication with hallucinogens has been associated with numerous subjective reports of death and dying. From the magical-religious uses of plant hallucinogens by New World Indians, through the psychedelic-assisted therapy of terminally ill cancer patients, to the recreational ecstasies of New Age users, the literature is replete with reports of hallucinations containing elements of near-death experiences (NDEs).... Perhaps more than any other hallucinogen, hashish has been associated with such NDEs.[23]

They then proceed to observe the parallels with spiritistic influence in both the NDE and hashish-induced NDEs.

(c) *The NDE can be related to yogic kundalini arousal:* Classical Hindu *kundalini* symptomatology (dramatic experiences with energy possession) has strong parallels with demon possession.[24] Thus, it is significant that Ring reports,

> In full kundalini awakenings, what is experienced is significantly similar to what many NDErs report from their experiences. And more than that: the aftereffects of these deep kundalini awakenings seem to lead to individual transformations and personal worldviews *essentially indistinguishable* from those found in NDErs.[25]

Indeed, according to Ring, "it seems that kundalini arousal gives one access to the same (or a similar) dimension of consciousness as does the core NDE."[26] This is why some NDErs have reported their belief that NDEs actually "*activate* kundalini energy."[27]

The nature of the deep NDE makes it evident that it is not a unique experience, but rather it is simply one of many forms of occult initiation—as other researchers have recognized.[28] This would explain the development of psychic powers as well as other aftereffects that are natural components of occult initiation and demonic energizing. Even Ring confesses that what happens during the NDE "has nothing inherently to do with death or with the transition to death.... [and that] this point cannot be emphasized too strongly.…"[29]

He cites psychiatrist Stanley Dean's ten-point typology of "ultra-consciousness" and its simi-

larity to the NDE, showing that the NDE is merely part of a larger worldwide trend involving the development of occult consciousness.[30] In other words, the NDE can involve full-blown occult transformation. The fact that it happens to occur in conjunction with a brush with death does not change this fact. What apparently is unique, however, is that some people are having this experience *without seeking it.*

(d) *The deep NDE involves a powerful transforming energy—an occult regeneration:* As further evidence of occult transformation in the NDE, we should observe that the person having a deep NDE is evidently infused with occult energy—and that for some this condition appears to be permanent: According to Ring,

> The implication is that qualities of the light somehow infuse themselves into the *core* of the experiencer's being so as to lead to a *complete union* with the light.... the testimony from more than one core experiencer indicates that there is a *direct transmission of the light's energy into themselves* and that what is absorbed in that encounter with the light in that moment outside of time *remains with them* when they return to the world of time. In short, the seeds of transformation appear to be implanted during the NDE.[31]

Obviously, if mystical energies are transferred and directly absorbed by a person, and remain, it would not be altogether improbable that some kind of, for lack of a better word, spiritual "operation" or occult regeneration might have been performed. After all, look at the variety of dramatic changes that ensue.

It is significant that these people report that they *merge* or *fuse with* this "light" which they interpret as God. Biblically, of course, this is impossible, for the biblical God "alone possesses immortality and dwells in *unapproachable* light; whom no man has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16, emphasis added). In other words, whatever the "light" is they are approaching and merging with, it is not the essence of God. Rather, this sounds like the old pagan initiations of the East and the occult, whose energy infusions are characteristically associated with *demonization*.[32] And if so, it is not surprising that for many people the NDE constitutes a *permanent* occult transformation.[33]

(e) *The NDE is relevant to occult and pagan religion, ancient and modern:* A number of studies have been done that reveal the importance of the NDE to the beliefs of various occult religions, including Mormonism, Swedenborgianism, and Tibetan Buddhism.[34]

The NDE also appears to be markedly similar to the transformations generated by the ancient pagan mystery religions. Ring comments on the essential agreement of the NDE and the ancient Egyptian Osirian rituals as to information learned:

> Certainly no one familiar with the literature on the near-death experience could fail to notice the many parallels, both in phenomenology and after-effects, between the Egyptian initiation and the NDE.... The NDE is, in its essence, identical to what the Osirian candidate learned during his initiation.[35]

In other words, by a profound occult experience, the initiate comes to realize that death is an illusion and that his true self is immortal.[36] Thus, one purpose of the ancient rituals was to employ hypnosis, magic and occult forces to induce the spirit to leave the body in experiential "confirmation" of occult truth about the illusion of death. The initiate was taught this lesson in the most profound way possible—by being made to experience within himself the process of dying and entering another dimension.

All of this is why so many people who have NDEs become enamored with the world of the occult. Indeed, we have talked with a number of individuals who became professional occultists (astrologers, Tarot readers, etc.) as a result of their NDE—and not infrequently as a result of their obedience to the commands of the spirits they met during their NDE.

But this new interest in occultism also occupies many who were only initially interested in researching the field of NDE phenomena. Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a leading thanatologist, [prior to her recent death] had spirit guides, did astral travel and believed in reincarnation from her "past lives" experience.[37]

Dr. Raymond Moody also decided to "look more closely" at occult writings after his initial research.[38] And, as we saw, parapsychologist Dr. Karlis Osis found great confirmation of the occult, mediumistic worldview after his NDE research. Liberal minister Archie Matson now advocates mediumism and occult practices,[39] and psychic Harold Sherman now supports necromancy via meditation.[40]

In conclusion, the above data prove that the near-death experience is, for many people, a dramatic conversion to the consequential world of the occult.[41] When Ring confesses that "what occurs during the NDE has nothing inherently to do with death or the transition to death,"[42] he is entirely correct.

**Notes:**

[1] John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Cult Watch: What You Need to Know About Spiritual Deception* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1991), pp. 257-260, 268-270.

[2] Cf. Bruce Greyson, "Increase in Psychic and Psi-Related Phenomena Following Near-Death Experiences," *Theta* (in press); Richard Kohr, "Near-Death Experience and Its Relationship to Psi and Various Altered States," *Theta,* Vol. 10 (1982), pp. 50-53; Kenneth Ring, "Paranormal and Other Non-Ordinary Aspects of Near-Death Experiences," *Essence,* Vol. 5 (1981), pp. 33-51; Kenneth Ring, "Precognitive and Prophetic Visions in Near-Death Experiences," *Anabiosis,* Vol. 2 (1982), pp. 47-74 and more recent studies.

[3] Kenneth Ring, *Heading toward Omega: In Search of the Meaning of the Near-Death Experience* (New York: William Morrow, 1985), pp. 166-174.

[4] Ibid., 166.

[5] Ibid., 180.

[6] Richard Kohl; "Near-Death Experiences, Altered States, Psi-Sensitivity," *Anabiosis,* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Dec. 1983), p. 152.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Melvin Morse, M.D., *Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children* (New York: Villard Books, 1990), pp. 115-116.

[9] Ibid., p. 126.

[10] Ring, *Heading,* pp. 172-173.

[11] Raymond Moody, *The Light Beyond: New Explorations by the Author of Life After Life* (New York: Bantam, 1989), pp. 12-13; Ring, *Heading,* pp. 317, 318, 323, 329.

[12] Moody, *The Light Beyond,* p. 193.

[13] Ibid., p. 197.

[14] Cf. Tal Brooke, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit,* available from SCP. P.O. Box 4308, Berkeley, CA 94704.

[15] Ring, *Heading,* pp. 87, 99, 102-103, etc.

[16] Ibid., p. 120.

[17] Stanislav Grof, Book Review, *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology,* Vol. 16, No. 2 (1984), p. 246.

[18] Ring, *Heading,* p. 51.

[19] Ibid., Chs. 4-8.

[20] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[21] John Pennachio, "Near-Death Experiences as Mystical Experience," *Journal of Religion and Health,* Vol. 25, No. 1 (1986), pp. 64, 70-71.

[22] Tillman Rodabough, "Near-Death Experiences: An Examination of the Supporting Data and Alternative Explanations," *Death Studies,* Vol. 9, No. 2 (1985), pp. 102-103.

[23] R.K. Siegel and A.E. Hirschman, "Hashish Near-Death Experience," *Anabiosis,* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1984), pp. 69, 84-85.

[24] John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Can You Trust Your Doctor?* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth &Hyatt, 1991), Ch. 19.

[25] Ring, *Heading,* p. 231 (emphasis added).

[26] Ibid., p. 234.
[27] Ibid., p. 237.
[28] See *Anabiosis,* Vol. 4, Nos. 1 & 2; Vol. 3, No. 1; Vol. 5, No. 2.
[29] Ring, *Heading,* p. 226.
[30] Ibid., pp. 227-228.
[31] Ibid., pp. 87-88.
[32] Tal Brooke, *Riders,* passim; cf. Ankerberg and Weldon, *Can You Trust Your Doctor?,* Ch. 19.
[33] Ring, *Heading,* p. 89; cf., pp. 90-219.
[34] C.R. Lundahl and H.A. Widdison, "The Mormon Explanation of Near-Death Experiences," *Anabiosis*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (June 1983), p. 103; cf. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Mormonism* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992), Chs. 18-20; and C.R. Lundahl, "The Perceived Otherworld in Mormon Near-Death Experiences As Social and Physical Description," *Omega*, Vol. 12, pp. 319-327 (1981-82); Leon Rhodes, "The NDE Enlarged by Swedenborg's Vision," *Anabiosis,* Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 1992), 15ff.; Carl Becker (Osaka Universty, Osaka, Japan), "Views from Tibet: NDEs and the Book of the Dead," who draws many parallels between the death-bed visions in the Tibetan Bon religion and Vajrayana (tantric) Buddhism as found in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.*
[35] Kenneth Ring, "From Alpha to Omega: Ancient Mysteries and the Near-Death Experience," *Anabiosis,* Vol. 5, No. 2 (1986), pp. 8-9.
[36] Ibid., p. 4.
[37] Lennie Kronish, "Elisabeth Kubler-Ross: Messenger of Love," Yoga Journal (September/October 1976), pp. 18-20; Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Death: The Final Stage of Growth (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1975), p. 119; K. Coleman, "Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in the Afterword of Entities," *New West* (July 30, 1979).
[38] Moody, *Life After Life,* p. 9.
[39] Archie Matson, *Afterlife* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 35, 57, 73, 92.
[40] Harold Sherman, *You Live After Death* (New York: Fawcett, 1972), 156; seven other examples are cited in Weldon and Levitt, *Is There Life After Death?* Ch. 5, notes.
[41] John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996).
[42] Ring, *Heading*, p. 226.



 